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# AFFIRMATION

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--- January 1979 ---
United Methodists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns

## Peggy and Michael

Co-coordinators:
Peggy Harmon & Michael Collins

While the 1980 General Conference is emerging in our concerns, AFFIRMATION's actual work is increasingly moving toward greater contact and ministry with the whole life of the United Methodist Church. With our May and October meetings in Chicago and Denver, the members of AFFIRMATION articulated a strong desire to give priority to the building of support for United Methodists who are working for the concerns of lesbian women and gay men. In May it was agreed that our priorities for programming would constantly be evaluated against how our work is building a strong network among persons involved in ministries with gay persons and their families. In October we focused upon developing strategies for General Conference and developing educational materials, perhaps a publication. As these two task forces worked, it became clear that what was most important to us was the long term effect that these concerns would have upon the lives of gay men and lesbian women, as well as upon the members of the United Methodist Church as a whole.

Since October it has been gratifying to have received a number of invitations to participate in seminars and workshops which gave AFFIRMATION the opportunity to share our broader concerns for ministry. We have reached a point in our history when the church, or at least a part of it, is expressing concern for us as full human beings and not merely as another caucus to be dealt with every four years in the General Conference. More and more persons in the church are seeing us as a part of the church rather than as an ad-hoc group merely organized around our self-interests.

In November Michael was invited to the Yale Divinity School campus where he met with a Men's Liberation group, talked with a number of students about a wide variety of issues related to doing ministry in the UMC, and spoke to Letty Russel's Liberation Theology class on the Gay movement, AFFIRMATION, and Liberation theology from a gay/lesbian perspective.

In early January Peggy led a workshop on "Lifestyles: Gay/Lesbian" at the Clergy Women's Conference in Dallas. Michael was one of three leaders in a workshop on "Sexuality and the Ministry" at the Western Jurisdiction meeting of Bishops, District Superintendents, and Program Directors in San Francisco.

In addition, Peggy is preparing workshops on human sexuality and the United Methodist Church for the three 1979 regional training events co-sponsored by the Women's Division and the Commission on the Status and Role of Women. The events will be held on weekends in January and February in Denver, Nashville, and in Washington, D.C.

In late January Michael will be one of three speakers to address the Board of Ordained Ministry and the District Superintendents of the New York Annual Conference at their educational event on homosexuality. The other two speakers are Walter Wink, professor of Bible at Union Theological Seminary, and Karen Ziegler, an MCC minister in the New York City area.

In addition to these invitations, members of AFFIRMATION have written in about opportunities they have had to meet with small groups of church persons in their local areas, and the growing interest there seems to be in wanting to sit down and discuss the needs and concerns of our sisters and brothers.

Both of us are excited--and somewhat exhausted--by these opportunities. At the same time we are looking forward to the opportunities that will continue to come to AFFIRMATION to be in this kind

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COME TO AFFIRMATION's SPRING MEETING

**DAYTON**

March 30-April 1, 1979

(see back page for registration form)

# Gay Money

Within 15 minutes the participants in the October meeting of AFFIRMATION in Denver pledged $8,300 from their own pockets to go to the work of AFFIRMATION. The funds are to be contributed over a 20 month period from october 1978 through May 1980. The $8,300 is slightly over a third of the $23,000 budget that was adopted for the support of the work of AFFIRMATION during this same period of time. In November and early December an additional $2,500 was pledged to AFFIRMATION from United Methodists who are working for lesbian /gay concerns.

Included in the budget are funds to support the travel and expenses of the co-convenors, Peggy Harmon and Michael Collins, during their tenure as representatives of AFFIRMATION, funds for the support of staff to do the daily administrative work of AFFIRMATION, and funds for the active participation of lesbians and gay men in the 1980 General Conference. The budget also includes funds for the communications work of AFFIRMATION including postage, the quarterly Newsletter, and a major publication which will be used to communicate the stories of joy and struggle of United Methodist lesbian women and gay men.

If 2/3 of the $23,000 is raised in pledges, and one half of the funds are collected or held in special accounts for AFFIRMATION (loaned by members on the faith that the balance can be raised by June 1, 1979), then AFFIRMATION will become the first historical protestant or catholic religious lesbian/gay community to support the work of staff (albeit at subsistence level) in this country. The total amount of the budget to go for support of staff is $9,000 which includes office and living expenses.

Pledges and contributions may be sent to either Peggy Harmon or to Michael Collins. Checks should be made payable to AFFIRMATION, or write to Michael or Peggy for information on how to receive tax credit for your contribution. (Some churches have made a contribution to AFFIRMATION a part of their intended ministry for 1979-80 and are willing to receive special designated, contributions for AFFIRMATION.) The following form may be used to declare your intention to give:

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Please accept my contribution to AFFIRMATION OF $_____ between now and June 1980 Payable $ _____ per _____. My check for $_____ is enclosed herewith.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ zip _____

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PEGGY AND MICHAEL (contd from page 1)

of ministry with the United Methodist Church. If you know of other opportunities for us to participate in workshops, seminars,or general speaking engagements during this next year and a half, please let us know. We are particularly interested in District and local church opportunities--as important places where persons are struggling with the gospel as it relates to lesbian women and gay men whom they know and love.

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BUDGET of AFFIRMATION for the 20 month period Oct. 1, 1978 to May 31, 1980 as adopted at Denver, Colo. October 1978.

| INCOME SOURCES | Estimated |
|---|---|
| Pledges received at Denver | $ 7,666.67 |
| Funds to be rcd from friends | $ 7,666.67 |
| Other sources | $ 7,666.66 |
| | $23,000.00 |

| DISBURSEMENTS | Anticipated |
|---|---|
| **General Conf.Expenses ($5,000)** | |
| Resources (seed money) | $ 500. |
| Media | $ 500. |
| Telephone | $ 250. |
| Supplies | $ 200. |
| Local Committee Expenses | $ 300. |
| Resource Center | $ 500. |
| Postage (Packet mailing) | $ 500. |
| Travel Subsidy 15 @ $150 | $ 2,250. |
| **Education Task Force ($2,050)** | |
| Packets @ 50¢ | $ 1,500. |
| Regional Seminars (seed money) | 500. |
| Resource Center Postage | $ 50. |
| Incorporation Exp. ($200) | $ 200. |
| **General Administration ($2,400)** | |
| Telephone | $ 1,000. |
| Travel | $ 1,000. |
| Postage | $ 400. |
| **Staff Costs ($11,000)** | |
| Salary | $ 9,000. |
| Expenses | $ 2,000. |
| | $ 20,650. |
| Reserve for shrinkage | $ 2,350. |
| Total needed | $ 23,000. |

---DEVOTIONAL READINGS---

"...We as gay people, perhaps beyond all others, feel constantly the bitter-sweet ambivalence of adherence to the institutional Church and commitment to the Spirit of Jesus; and we know that they are not always congruent."

--Paul Weidig, DIGNITY President,9/78

"This day I will concentrate on the inner meaning of the Commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." I will accept myself, for that is the primary condition under which the good in me can grow. Unless I am at peace with the child of God I am, I cannot love and help my neighbor. Regrets are vain. They interfere with the good I could do today, the making of the better person I want to be tomorrow ... Condemning ourselves for mistakes we have made is just as bad as condemning others for theirs. We are not really equipped to make judgments, not even of ourselves..."

--AL-ANON Reading for January 5

PROCESS THEOLOGY The Christian Century of Jan. 17, 1979,carried an article by Dr. Arvid Adell who chairs the philosophy department at Milikin University, Decatur, Ill., from which this paragraph: "From the viewpoint of process theology, the question of homosexuality can evoke a new interpretation. There is no need to suggest that the Scriptures are perennially averse to this form of human sexuality. Instead,the church can affirm the validity of those proscriptions in manifesting God's absolute concern for the nascent Jewish and Christian communities, and then raise the question concerning their value for contemporary society. Given the demographic situation of the early communities, God's care might well have been expressed through his insistence that sexuality always be open to the possibility of reproduction. Therefor, homosexuality would be wrong. However, this situation has changed, and this same insistence may not now be advantageous or propitious. Relative to the mission and the stance of the 20th century church, the question would be whether the affirmation and acceptance of homosexuals is harmonious with God's changeless love for his children."

# Women's Caucus

AFFIRMATION will be forming a Women's Caucus at the upcoming Dayton meeting . There will be time for us as women to meet as a group and to begin discussion of our particular needs. A priority issue will be building a strong national support network.

The Women's Caucus will be open to all women who wish to support their Lesbian sisters.

If you wish to participate but are unable to attend the Dayton meeting, please let us know of your needs, thoughts and support by writing a letter. If you do not wish to share your name, your letter is still welcome. Letters may be sent to Peggy Harmon, co-convenor, at [redacted] Dallas, TX [redacted].

"NEIGHBORS OR NOT?" was the name chosen by a committee of students, staff and faculty of the Saint Paul School of Theology concerned about gay rights in planning and conducting a series of workshops Nov. 1-16, 1978 in Kansas City. Resource persons included Dr. Lindsey P. Herigo, professor of New Testament and Early Church History at Boston University; Dr. Charles Baugham, professor of Old Testament at Perkins School of Theology; Kieth Spare, third year student at St. Pauls and founder of Gay Talk Crisis Line at Kansas State; The Rev. Jim Glyer, MCC pastor; Lea Hopkins, poet, lesbian, mother and author of "I'm not Crazy, Just Different"; and Bruce Eklund, former St. Pauls student and AFFIRMATION's director of communications.

Two films were included in the program: "Word is Out," and the 30 minute documentary about gay parents and the struggles they face, "Sandy and Madelain's Family." "Parents and Friends of Gays" Day was celebrated at MCC. "The Bible and homosexuality,"and "The Church and the Gay Liberation Movement" were subjects of presentations and discussions. It was a faculty forum which addressed the prophetic question, "Neighbor or not?" with the objective of moving the church to understand the call of all Christians to live out the gospel of grace.

SHARE YOUR CONCEPT OF MINISTRY through the Board of Global Ministries by submitting entries no later than May 15, 1979, as indicated below:

SPECIFICATIONS

Every entry must be identified (name, address, church, conference, age category—under 16/over 16). Attach form. (Duplicate for each entry.)

POSTER The poster should include a slogan. Image size should be 20x28". All work should be mounted on poster or illustration board with a 3" border on top and sides and 4" on bottom. Finished size with border is 26x35" if vertical and 27x34" if horizontal. Any medium, such as oil, watercolor, poster paint, casein or acrylic; photos, photostats, montage or collage alone or in combination with art, is acceptable.

STORY/ARTICLE Approximately 1500 words, typed double-spaced on 8½x11" bond paper.

PHOTOGRAPH

black and white:

minimum size—5x7" mounted on 8x10" illustration board

8x10" or larger, mounted

up to 5 prints may be submitted (identify each) Do NOT send negatives (negatives may be requested on loan for selected photos)

color: color slides only

up to 5 slides may be submitted

each should have name and address on mount

To: MISSION MEANS...
Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church
Room 1358
475 Riverside Drive
New York, N.Y. 10027

Name . . . . . .
Address. . . . . .
. . . . . .
Church . . . . . .
Address. . . . . .
. . . . . .
Annual Conference . . . . . .

[ ] Poster [ ] Story/Article [ ] Photography

*ATTACH TO ENTRY*

[ ] Under 16 [ ] Over 16

-----AFFIRMATION DIRECTOR-----

Peggy Harmon, co-coordinator
[redacted]
Dallas, Texas [redacted]

Michael Collins, co-coordinator
[redacted]
New York, New York [redacted]

Douglas Brandt, Education Task Force
[redacted]
Denver, Coloraco [redacted]

Bruce W. Eklund, Communications Center
[redacted]
Kansas City, Kansas [redacted]

Ed Egan, Newsletter Editor
[redacted]
Haverstraw, New York [redacted]

ANNUAL CONFERENCE JOURNALS are needed for the work of AFFIRMATION and copies will be gladly received by the co-coordinators.

**$10.00**

is the modest cost of AFFIRMATION membership for a year and for subscription to the Newsletter. Please forward to Peggy Harmon or Michael Collins.

SEE YOU IN DAYTON Ohio, March 30-April 1, 1979 for the spring meeting of AFFIRMATION. Details will be sent to those who pre-register by using the form on the back page of this Newsletter. Friday night will be a sharing and educational event led by members of AFFIRMATION. Saturday will be given to the work of the Task Forces, and Sunday will be a plenary and group session.

Details from Jim Cook, making local arrangements: [redacted], Dayton, Ohio [redacted] or from AFFIRMATION's co-coordinators.

# UMC General Conference -- 1980

Changes in the social principles statement regarding homosexual persons and changes in the Discipline, particularly paragraph 906.13, emerged as the top legislative priorities for AFFIRMATION at the fall meeting in Denver. Upon recommendation of the Task Force on General Conference Legislation and Strategies, the following two legislative goals were adopted:

1) that AFFIRMATION and its members petition the 1980 General Conference to delete the following phrase from the Social Principles: "...though we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" (para.71-D, page 90, Book of Discipline, United Methodist Ch.)

2) that AFFIRMATION and its members petition the 1980 General Conference to delete from the Book of Discipline para. 906.13, page 337, which, addressing the Council on Finance and Administration, reads: "The Council shall be responsible for ensuring that no Board, agency, committee, commission or council shall give United Methodist funds to any 'gay' caucus or group or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality. The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures."

Other legislative goals may be developed at AFFIRMATION's spring meeting in Dayton, March 30 to April 1, 1979.

It was decided in Denver to launch a campaign to gather petitions for the above mentioned legislative goals. Petitioning the General Conference is the major way it receives legislation from United Methodists from all levels of the church. A petition may be sent by any district, annual or jurisdictional conference or general agency; any caucus, or any other grouping of United Methodists. The petitions are assigned to legislative committees to be dealt with there, usually by subcommittees first and then by the whole committee. The committee will vote concurrence or non-concurrence in sending it to the General Conference or it may refer to another legislative committee.

A petition should be brief and should state clearly: 1) the proposed legislation; and 2) the rationale for such legislation. Two copies must be sent no later than March 1, 1980, to the Rev. Newell P. Knudson, [redacted] Eureka, California [redacted].

AFFIRMATION has stated the following rationale for its proposed legislation: "The social principles statement is contradictory concerning homosexuals, stating that '...Homosexuals, no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, who need the ministry and guidance of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship which enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self...' yet also stating that 'we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.' These contradictions raise serious questions about the church's love and care for all persons."

The Women's Division policy statement on human sexuality raises these questions concerning the social principles statement: "What is the church's mission? Are we commissioned to live and minister to all persons as sexual beings, or just to some? What is an inclusive church? Is sin a state of being or an act? Is there less love, respect and fidelity among homosexual followers of Christ ? What kind of belief about the self-development of peoples do we really hold by acting as if there is only one sexual norm to which all must or can be converted?"

AFFIRMATION believes that the derogatory phrase about homosexuals must be deleted in order that the church may be clear about its support of all persons and its belief that homosexuals are persons of "sacred worth." We also feel that it is important for the United Methodist Church to be a leader in the religious community by overcoming its homophobia and by clearly welcoming lesbians and gay men into the life of the church.

Paragraph 906.13 has effectively cut off much communication and dialogue between United Methodist homosexuals and

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1979

UMC GENERAL CONFERENCE--1980 (continued)

the rest of the church. This paragraph has been used as the rationale for not funding community service projects working with lesbians and gay men; and for not including gay persons in educational events on human sexuality and specifically on homosexuality. If the church is to actively pursue dialogue with lesbians and gay men, then this paragraph must be deleted.

Primary attention should be given during the next six months to securing petitions from local churches and districts and individuals, and to the annual conferences calling for them to petition the General Conference for these changes. Petitions from annual conferences often carry 'more weight' than petitions from local churches or individuals, although all are extremely important. Annual conference headquarters should be contacted to obtain the correct form and procedure for petitioning the annual conference.

Attention should also be given to the election at the 1979 annual conferences of delegates to the General and Jurisdictional conferences. These delegates, by their caliber and stance, will determine the law and the episcopal leadership of the United Methodist Church for the years to come.

AFFIRMATION would like copies of the various petitions sent in support of our proposals. Please send copies to Mike Collins, [redacted], New York, NY [redacted], or to Peggy Harmon, [redacted] Dallas, TX [redacted].

WRITING FOR AFFIRMATION ENCOURAGED

For a long time, almost from the very beginning of our national meetings in 1975, United Methodist gay men and lesbian women have been talking about the need to share our stories. In planning for our future at the October meeting in Denver, the task forces on education and communication began planning for a major publication which would give us this kind of opportunity. As envisioned, the publication would include original material which speaks to the experiences of us as Christians who are gay. It could include poetry, songs, excerpts from sermons, essays, short descriptions of our involvements in doing ministry among lesbian women and gay men, and drawings which communicate the struggles and joys of our lives. Such a publication is seen as a means of sharing our doing of theology with each other, with the United Methodist Church, and with society.

Articles might include such concerns as: How the gospel confronts us to be open persons and what this has meant for our own lives; What it means to be bisexual, living in a "straight" world and also having "gay" needs and desires; New forms of women's spirituality and spiritual growth; Reflections on particular Biblical passages; Growing in your relationship with your parents, close friends or children, as we become vulnerable and open. Articles are also needed which define the needs for civil rights, the calls we receive for doing ministry, the growing experiences we have as Christians.

Articles should go to Doug Brandt, [redacted] Denver, Colo. [redacted].

Registration for Spring Meeting of AFFIRMATION in Dayton, Ohio
Friday, 7:30 p.m., to Sunday Noon: March 30 - April 1,1979

NAME _____ Phone _____
Address _____

I need transportation from the Dayton airport or bus station: ____ Yes ____ NO.
My airline or busline is _____ Flight # _____
My arrival time and date are _____ a.m., p.m. on March _____ 1979
I would like to stay in someone's home: ____ Yes ____ NO.

Please find $10.00 for the whole meeting enclosed with this registration form and sent to:

Dick Cash
[redacted]
New York, NY [redacted]

Chairing local arrangements is:

Jim Cook
[redacted]
Dayton, Ohio [redacted]